
What Members of European Parliament should consider when discussing New GE

Testbiotech warns about biotech industry influence

13 April 2021 / The *Panel for the Future of Science and Technology* (STOA) at the European Parliament is organising a hearing on New Genetic Engineering (New GE or genome editing) and techniques, such as CRISPR/Cas, on 15 April 2021. A recent *European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies* (EGE) opinion will be presented at the hearing. STOA is a service to provide impartial information to the European Parliament, but the current hearing has attracted some criticism.

STOA carried out a stakeholder consultation ahead of the consultation. There is however no sign that it will publish any of the submitted comments. Testbiotech has therefore decided to publicize its input to the consultation in the interests of transparency in a backgrounder. It clearly shows that current GMO regulation is sufficient in regard to genome edited plants.

Furthermore, Testbiotech has concerns that the STOA conference programme might not be sufficiently balanced: according the draft programme, there are several members of an international lobby organisation (PRRI) among the speakers which is known for advocating biotech industry positions. In addition, the keynote speaker is involved in filing patent applications on CRISPR/Cas technology licensed exclusively to the biotech company, Corteva (DowDupont). Additional speakers were invited after Testbiotech and *Corporate Observatory Europe* (CEO) sent a joint letter.

A section of the *European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies* (EGE) opinion on New GE crop plants will be presented during the STOA conference. Testbiotech analysed this section of the opinion and concluded that it is not sufficiently science-based. Therefore, Testbiotech recommends that it is reviewed by independent scientists, who were not involved in its compilation and are free from interests in the application of the technology.

STOA is not the only service providing scientific expertise to the EU Parliament that is faced with targeted lobbying for New GE. For example, the *European Parliamentary Research Service* (EPRS) published a pro New GE statement on CRISPR/Cas in 2020 that had been revised by an expert at the University of Leuven. This same expert had taken part in a pro GE event in Brussels in 2019. The GE activists attempted at the time to offer non-EU approved genome-edited rice to members of the EU parliament for their own consumption - this event had to be stopped by the authorities.

Recently, *Corporate Observatory Europe* (CEO), an organisation dedicated to exposing corporate lobbying in the EU, published material showing how experts and industry seek to systematically influence EU policies. Their goal: the marketing in the EU of plants derived from New GE without mandatory risk assessment or labelling.

Contact:

Christoph Then, info@testbiotech.org [1], Tel + 49 (0) 151 54638040

Further information: [The Testbiotech backgrounder on STOA](#) [2]

[The EPRS briefing](#) [3]

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